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RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA//
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000366

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ SITREP 5: GROUND OPERATIONS CONTINUE,
MILITARY ANNOUNCEMENT, PRESS COMMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 0331
[1](#)B. ANKARA 0340
[1](#)C. ANKARA 0343
[1](#)D. ANKARA 0354

Classified By: A/DCM Kim DeBlauw for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Turkish ground forces continue to engage PKK terrorists in the Zap Metina region of northern Iraq, supported by air and artillery strikes. Deteriorating weather conditions in the objective area will likely hamper operations over the next 24 hours. Normal logistics and customs operations continue at Habur Gate.

[1](#)2. (U) A TGS press statement released on February 25 reported engagements with terrorists continued sporadically on the fourth day of ground operations. The statement indicated the Turkish Air Force destroyed 30 targets. According to the TGS, 41 terrorists and two Turkish troops were killed in the fourth day of the fighting, leaving the total number killed at 153 and 17 respectively, as of February 25. The TGS statement noted that intelligence gathered during the operation confirmed earlier reports that terrorists of foreign nationality were mostly acting independently in order to gain control of the organization's armed force.

[1](#)3. (U) During remarks to ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) deputies at Parliament on February 26, PM Erdogan emphasized the unity of the Turkish people, and extended condolences to the families of Turkish soldiers killed in the fight against the PKK. Erdogan stressed four points about ongoing operations in northern Iraq. First, the operation is not targeting northern Iraq, but only the PKK. Second, Turkey is acting within the boundaries of international law in dealing with terrorism. Third, the Turkish military has taken care not to harm civilians and civilian infrastructure in northern Iraq. Finally, Turkish troops will return to Turkey once their mission has been completed. Erdogan also expressed appreciation for the Iraqi government's cooperation in the operation, and for the PKK-related intelligence provided by the United States, which he called turkey's "strategic partner."

[1](#)4. (U) Speaking to the press after the regular Monday Council of Ministers meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and GOT spokesman Cemil Cicek stated that the Turkish Military has been given full authority to conduct any type of operation. He

emphasized the only target of the operation was the PKK, noting the current operation is focused on the PKK's infrastructure and there is no intention to harm civilians. Cicek said there is no need for a buffer zone if both Iraqi and American forces provide border security. He added that the EU accepts the PKK as a terrorist organization, yet allows PKK terrorists to travel in EU countries. Finally, when asked to respond to Secretary Gates' comment that political and economic measures should be part of the solution, Cicek said, "Turkey is trying its best to implement economic and political initiatives but it is often portrayed as if it were not."

¶5. (U) Turkish media, based near the border but nowhere near the action, continue reporting their version of the ground operations in northern Iraq. Adnan Gayhan, correspondent for Istanbul's Kanal 7 TV, reported from Habur Gate that "a total of 150,000 troops with their hands on the trigger are waiting along the 330km line stretching from Habur to Semdinli." Islamist-oriented Zaman reported that PKK has started to use television broadcasts and internet sites to boost PKK morale by reporting false casualty numbers. Mainstream Sabah said the PKK is trying to avoid a front-line war with TAF, preferring to escape instead of fight. NTV news reported "The PKK are fleeing, but they are caught in the Zap valley," while mainstream Milliyet wrote, "The Zap region, which is of critical importance to the PKK, is besieged by Turkish troops." Army terrorism expert Ercan Citlioglu, when asked by Sabah about the establishment of a buffer zone, responded, "We have had a tank unit in Iraq since 1993. We have also maintained Special Forces units there. These may continue to serve there in larger numbers."

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¶6. (U) Media outlets have also been reporting that, while the CBO continues, PM Erdogan has been pushing for additional, non-military steps to combat the PKK. Tercuman daily newspaper noted some of the measures as including outreach by parents of PKK members to put down their weapons, an economic package for the Southeast (which DPM Ekren reportedly has been working on for some weeks), and an amnesty plan for terrorists who have not committed any crimes. Commenting on Erdogan's proposal, mainstream Sabah columnist Mehmet Barlas pointed to political measures as being crucial to cope with the political polarization that has emerged in the Southeast. Murat Yetkin, writing for liberal Radikal, argued that the government is not expected to unveil any package of political, economic, or cultural measures, citing a need first to establish military control over the PKK before any other measures can be taken. Mainstream Vatan reported on a demonstration by up to 10,000 people in Diyarbakir to protest the operations where former pro-Kurdish parliamentarian Leyla Zana reportedly suggested that "state officials should sit at the table with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in order to solve the Kurdish issue."

¶7. (U) Nationalist Cumhuriyet reported on U.S. approval of the ground offensive. The conservative paper wrote that during PM Erdogan's November visit to Washington, only air raids in Northern Iraq were approved, suggesting the situation then changed as a result of a bargain on Afghanistan, Iran and the shipment of Iraqi oil and natural gas to international markets. Cumhuriyet further noted allegations that the U.S. not only supported the CBO, but actually encouraged it as a way of reducing the influence of Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani in the Iraqi government.

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